



# Plant Chat

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## Leadplant: a Half-shrub

Bareroot stock of leadplant has been provided by the PMC for field plantings the past two years. These bareroot plants are available from several nurseries, including Lincoln-Oakes Nursery in Bismarck. The easiest way to get leadplant established in a native planting is with bareroot plants. Commercial seed sources can be found more readily than in the past. Plants establish slowly from seed, with the majority of seedling growth happening below the soil surface the first two growing seasons.



*Leadplant — showing off its summer colors*

Leadplant is classified as a half-shrub and a legume. So what is a half-shrub? Most plants classified as half-shrubs grow in arid and semi-arid regions. According to one definition a half-shrub has a woody base and lower stems, but the top growth re-

mains herbaceous during the growing season. This top growth is sensitive to early frosts. This is typical of leadplant. Most young plants appear to die back to the ground. In the following



*Lifting bareroot leadplant for transplanting*

year, very small buds will form at the base, and it may be well into June before they start to leaf out.

Leadplant is very common in native prairies, but tends to disappear under heavy grazing. Flowering begins in late June. The dark blue flowers, with a single petal, are conspicuous for several weeks. The leaves of the plant are lead-colored. These leaflets can fold together to reduce water loss in times of drought. Leadplant has an extensive root system, reaching down to 16 feet. Nodules occur throughout the entire root system of the legume.

*Mike Knudson, Forester, Plant Materials Center*

## Know What's in the Bag

All things are not created equal — this is especially true for seed. The extent to which seed is processed (cleaned) can have a dramatic impact on your success during the seeding operation. Placing the right amount of seed at the right depth, and getting good seed to soil contact is critical for success. It is very important to know what equipment will be used in seeding and then match this to the seed

being purchased. Awned, fluffy seed is not poor quality seed, but special equipment needs to be used to be successful at seeding. Trying to poke this fluffy material down a standard grain drill will be frustrating, and will not end in a successful seeding. Today's seed processing technology allows all or portions of this fluffy awn material to be removed (debearded). This results in seed that is much more flowable and generally easier to seed, even with a traditional grain drill. Be sure to purchase seed with good purity and germination. Ask to see a sample of the seed lot to be sure it has been



processed to the degree that you feel comfortable with and have the capabilities of seeding with the resources you have available.

*Wayne Duckwitz, Manager, Plant Materials Center*

## Think About Big Bluestem

The PMC staff has been putting together a brochure promoting the use of big bluestem as a high quality summer forage. Copies of the brochure will be sent to all field offices. Now is a good time to consider establishing a warm-season pasture of big bluestem. Good seed supplies have resulted in seed prices being reduced to around \$4 per PLS pound.

*Mike Knudson, Forester, Plant Materials Center*



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